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The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

17 September 1984

Dear Clare,

I was much interested in hearing about your reading during the summer and to supplement it I send you a book I recently read and found to be the most vivid description of how the Soviet system currently works.

In case you don't feel like reading the book, here's a summary.

Yours,

William J. Casey

Enclosures

The Honorable Clare Boothe Luce

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NOMENKLATURA

The Soviet Ruling Class
An Insider's Report

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SUBJECT: Review/Summary of Nomenklatura by Michael Voslensky

I. Introductory Remarks

Nomenklatura by Dr. Michael Voslensky is unique in the view it affords the reader of the inner workings of the contemporary Soviet political system. The book provides great insights into the workings of the Soviet system as a whole, emphasizing the collective concern of the nomenklatura (the ruling class) and its constraints on individual leaders. This is of particular interest as one addresses the issue of the personal strength, power and authority of Konstantin Chernenko as general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union as compared to his colleagues in the Politburo and other elements in the Soviet government and party.*

According to Voslensky, Chernenko's election as general secretary did not represent a personal triumph. It was instead a compromise by the top Soviet leadership between two factions, neither of which was powerful enough in its own right to successfully mount a candidate to succeed Yuriy Andropov. On the one hand was the old guard, Gromyko and Ustinov; on the other were the voices of the future, Gorbachev and Dolgikh, Andropov's hopes for the continuance of his legacy. What is seen today issuing from the Politburo is not a unified policy. Instead, contradictory signals issue forth, representing the struggles of factions, demonstrating the absence of a firm hand at the helm and the consequent relative autonomy of certain of the Politburo members.

The months since Chernenko's succession in February have been rife with indications of this factional struggle:

--Speeches by various officials have indicated absence of agreement in the Politburo over whether to resume high-level negotiations with the U.S. Chernenko and Gorbachev were the most positive on this point, Gromyko and Ustinov more skeptical.

--Regarding Soviet participation in the Olympics, the head of the Soviet Olympic Committee was firm in his

*For an explanation of the functions of the chief elements of the party, we have included an excerpt from Nomenklatura as Part II of this report.

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assurances early in the year that Soviet athletes would be in Los Angeles, until suddenly the policy switched.

--Soviet officials who have expressed opinions about Chernenko have not spoken with a unified voice. In fact, many disparaging remarks about his lack of foreign policy experience and the state of his health have been made.

--Speeches in which Chernenko has been mentioned have ranged from restraint to enthusiastic praise.

--The economy and the need for reform has produced a sharp debate, with the result that stagnation continues.

According to Voslensky, all this indicates that Chernenko is not in complete control. Nor is any other single person. While both Foreign Minister Gromyko and Defense Minister Ustinov appear to operate with a certain degree of autonomy, exercising authority in their respective spheres of influence, they too are operating within the constraints of the nomenklatura collective. Toward the end of his book, Dr. Voslensky addresses the concerns of the nomenklatura in the field of foreign policy. He contends that Soviet leaders genuinely do not want a nuclear war, not from a desire to protect the good citizens of the Soviet Union, but because they know that the destruction brought about by a nuclear confrontation would also mean the end of their power, and probably even their own personal demise. The nomenklaturist as portrayed by Dr. Voslensky is power hungry, striving to preserve and enhance his power at all costs. What the nomenklatura wants, then, is world domination for the Soviet Union without war, victory over the West without fighting. Dr. Voslensky contends that the Soviet leaders make a show of pugnacity for the purpose of persuading the West that communism is preferable to catastrophe--and that the Soviet threats are nothing but a bluff.

The aspirations of the nomenklatura to world hegemony are not to be doubted, Voslensky maintains. While Europe is of prime importance to the Soviets owing to its industrial capabilities, it would be a mistake to dismiss Soviet nomenklatura policy in Third World countries. The hostility felt by these countries toward their former colonial masters is skillfully played by the Soviet Union. Sloganizing against the West has enabled the Soviet Union to secure the systematic support of many Third World countries in the United Nations and other international bodies.

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PART II. Excerpts from Chapter 6 - "The Dictatorship of the Nomenklatura"

The book provides insight into the nomenklatura in general, its composition, interests and functions. It is in Chapter 6, however, "The Dictatorship of the Nomenklatura", that Voslensky focuses on the most important political bodies in the Soviet Union: the Politburo and the Secretariat. As the Soviet foreign policy decisions which impact most heavily on the United States are made in these two bodies, excerpts from this chapter are offered below.

The Central Committee

The term Central Committee of the CPSU has various meanings; it may refer to (i) the plenum of the CPSU (i.e., all the members elected to it by the party congress); (ii) the Politburo and Secretariat of the Central Committee; (iii) The Central Committee apparatus...The supreme organs of state are the Politburo and the Secretariat, ...the real government of the Soviet Union; the Council of Ministers has executive powers, but is not a government in the political meaning of the term. An even more modest role is played by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, which is a symbolic body practically without real power. The Politburo and the Secretariat of the Central Committee are the Soviet equivalent of a cabinet.

That they are the most important bodies in the country is shown by the prominence given to them in all Soviet publications. When the country's leading political figures are listed, the voting and non-voting members of the Politburo and the secretaries of the Central Committee are mentioned first; the offices they hold are not mentioned, for it is assumed that everyone knows them. Next come the vice presidents of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, the vice presidents of the Council of Ministers, and other eminent bureaucrats in the nomenklaturist hierarchy, with the offices they hold.

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Secretary General

There is a widespread view that the country is governed by the Secretary-General of the Central Committee, but it is mistaken. To convince oneself of that, it is sufficient to ask this question: If policy was autocratically laid down by personalities as different as Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, and Andropov, how did it come about that the most significant features of that policy remained unchanged?

The answer is that the country is governed not by the Secretary-General but by the nomenklatura class; the policy followed by the Central Committee is not that of the Secretary-General but that of this class. The guidelines of that policy were laid down by Lenin and Stalin, the fathers of the nomenklaturist class, in conformity with its requirements, and it is that which is largely responsible for their reputation as autocratic leaders. They unquestionably exercised paternal authority over a ruling class that was not yet firmly in the saddle, but as we have already pointed out, at the same time they were dependent on it. On the other hand, Khrushchev and, to an even greater extent, Brezhnev and Andropov, were never anything but supreme executants of the nomenklatura will.

The Secretary-General is the top nomenklaturist and is consequently the most powerful man in real-socialist society. As Lenin noted a few months after Stalin's appointment, immense power is concentrated in his hands. Anyone who tries to assume leadership of the nomenklatura without being assured of that position is inevitably thrown out, as happened to Malenkov and then to Shelepin.

The question is not whether the Secretary-General has great power (he has), but whether his power is the only one in the country (the Politburo, the Secretariat, and the apparatus being subordinate to him at differing levels).

He is the head both of the Politburo and of the Secretariat, but his relations with the directive organs of the nomenklaturist class are not those of a commander and his subordinates.

Two phases must be distinguished in a Secretary-General's relations with the Politburo and the Secretariat. In the first, the members of both bodies will have been taken over from his predecessor; in the second, most members of both bodies will be his own proteges.

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Approval of his appointment to the post of Secretary-General amounts to formal recognition of his sovereignty, but his former fellows in fact regard him as an upstart who has managed to overtake them. At best, they regard him as primus inter pares. Hence the appointment of a new Secretary-General is invariably accompanied by a reaffirmation of the principle of collective leadership.

The objective of the new Secretary-General is to concentrate unrestricted power in his own hands, and he is in an excellent position to do so. The major difficulty is that everyone is aware of his intentions. He cannot, at any rate at first, afford to get rid of his enemies in the Politburo and the Secretariat, because the latter, having reached the top level in the nomenklaturist class, will each have a large number of vassals. So he has to be on excellent terms with them all; every single one of them must regard him as a lesser evil. Meanwhile he must use his ingenuity to form a coalition against those who stand in his way and eventually get rid of them, at the same time doing everything he can to secure the appointment of his own followers to leading positions. The usual method is to have his vassals appointed to positions that give access to the highest nomenklatura posts.

The Politburo

The president of the Council of Ministers and the principal secretaries of the Central Committee are now assured of a place in the Politburo, as are the president of the KGB and the Defense and Foreign ministers, the first secretaries of the biggest federated republics (Ukraine and Kazakhstan), those of less important republics, who enjoy the privilege in turn, and finally the first secretaries of the Moscow and Leningrad party committees. This is an example of the trend toward conservative stability and the establishment of definite rules that accord with the wishes of the nomenklatura class.

Since it no longer consists of a clique of friends, but of persons selected more or less on a representative basis, relations inside the Politburo are extremely complex. Appointments to important posts are always painfully protracted, because relations of strength in the Politburo are delicately balanced.

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It would be wrong to conclude from this that those who gain entry to the Politburo and remain in it are a collection of incompetents. On the contrary, they have to possess an extra qualification, that of being able to conceal their real political talents while not creating the impression of being incompetent or insufficiently qualified. Though all of them except the Secretary-General seem colorless, the members of the Politburo and the Central Committee Secretariat are very astute politicians.

How does the Politburo work?

It meets once a week, on Thursdays, in accordance with the practice initiated by Lenin. There was nothing fortuitous about the choice of that day; it enables a report of the proceedings, including the resolutions passed, to be printed on Friday. Copies are in the hands of the heads of the administrative offices concerned first thing on Monday morning, and the latter are able to see to their execution.

The form in which questions submitted for decision to the Politburo and the higher organs of the nomenklatura are drafted was laid down by Lenin, and his instructions are still in force. The following rules applied to the drafting of submissions to the Council of People's Commissars:

(a) The subject matter must be briefly stated. A simple indication (of the type re so-and-so) is not sufficient; the full implications of the question must clearly emerge.

(b) What action is it suggested that the Council of Commissars should take? (E.g, grant funds, pass a particular resolution, etc. The raiser of the issue must state clearly what he wants.)

(c) Does the question come within the competence of other commissars? If so, which? Any written documents?

That is the form in which questions submitted to the Politburo still have to be presented.

Brief minutes are taken of Politburo and Secretariat meetings; they merely state what resolutions have been passed and give no clue to the nature of the discussion; they are the only official documents that exist about these meetings. The resolutions are put in a thick file in a dark red envelope and brought by KGB courier to all the members of the Central Committee. The latter keep them in their safes and return them with their signatures to confirm that the contents have been noted. Really secret resolutions are not circulated

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in this way; they are put in a so-called "special portfolio", and the minutes of the meeting mention only the number of the resolution and the administrative office that submitted it, stating that the resolution is in that portfolio. Members of the Central Committee apparatus in responsible positions have access to it (they lost that privilege after the events in Czechoslovakia in 1968). The files are then destroyed, except for a few copies that are kept in the Central Committee records and are eventually handed over to the party record office in the Central Committee Institute of Marxism-Leninism.

The Secretariat

In the past few years, the number of secretaries has varied between ten and twelve. The Secretary-General's responsibility covers the whole field; the other secretaries are responsible only for their special fields; e.g., party organization, ideology, national defense, industry, agriculture, the international Communist movement. Under Stalin there was also a secretary for personnel and another for state security. Nowadays personnel work is divided up among the various divisions of the Central Committee, and the Administrative Department comes under the secretary responsible for party organization. As we have already pointed out, all the members of the Politburo are of equal rank in the party hierarchy except the Secretary-General, whose primacy is admitted; in the Secretariat, however, there is a definite hierarchy.

The first dividing line is between secretaries who are also members or non-voting members of the Politburo and those who are not; the difference is so great that they could well be called secretaries and under secretaries.

The differences in status among Central Committee secretaries are strictly taken into account when draft resolutions are circulated. These are not submitted to all, or even most, of the secretaries, as the approval of only five out of twelve is required for a resolution to be adopted. The general department of the Central Committee, which is responsible for circulating the drafts, first obtains the approval of the secretary in whose province it comes, and then arranges things so as to obtain the signature of at least one or two of the senior secretaries. The heads of the general department are men of great experience who know all about the likes and dislikes of the Central Committee secretaries and are thus in a position to hold up resolutions or even cause them to fail.

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Each Central Committee secretary has a small secretariat of his own. The seniors have two assistants and two secretaries, and the juniors have to manage with one assistant and two secretaries. The secretaries' secretaries work every day from morning till night to cope with the day's workload. Like the secretaries' assistants, they belong to the Secretariat nomenklatura and are entitled to kremliovka rations* and a vertushka.** The secretaries' assistants have the rank of candidates for the position of deputy head of a Central Committee division, and the secretaries that of candidates for the post of head of a desk.

The Central Committee Apparatus

The Central Committee apparatus exercises power by the nomenklaturist class not only by keeping the "directive organs" informed and drafting their resolutions; it also gives orders.

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*Kremliovka coupons entitle the bearer to "medical nutrition". Three coupons per day can be exchanged at the Kremlin canteen for meals whose helpings are so generous that a single portion is enough to feed a whole family. Many nomenklaturists prefer to exchange their kremliovka coupons for food baskets full of luxuries normally unobtainable in Moscow.

**A special government telephone line.

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PART III. Summary of the Book

The following is a summarization of the remainder of the book in which Voslensky dissects the whole of the Soviet Union's ruling class body.

Introduction

Nomenklatura is a masterful analytical study of the ruling class of the Soviet Union, a ruling class created by Stalin, numbering today around 750,000. Voslensky points out that the domestic policy of the nomenklatura class is to consolidate its dictatorial power, and its foreign policy is to extend it to the whole world. The nomenklatura has some positive achievements to its credit, Dr. Voslensky tells us, but it is becoming more and more parasitic. Its contribution is nil and its stubborn desire for world domination involves the grave danger of world war. To banish this danger, the world not under Moscow's domination needs a determined and fearless policy of peace and security.

Dr. Voslensky's representation of the nomenklatura rings with authenticity for he writes from personal experience inside the system. He is a prominent Soviet historian, a graduate of Moscow University with extensive postgraduate study in the Soviet Union and the GDR. He has occupied various positions in the Soviet Union including professor in the Academy of Sciences in Moscow, executive secretary of the Disarmament Commission, vice chairman of the Bilateral Historians Commission, member of the Soviet Committee for European Security, and professor at Lumumba University, Moscow. He defected without public notice in West Germany in 1972. In 1977 he was expatriated by the Soviets and he moved to Austria. Now he is director of the Institute of Contemporary Soviet Research in Munich, West Germany. He is the author of five books and 450 other publications (most in the USSR before his defection) and is internationally recognized as one of the foremost experts on the internal affairs of the Soviet Union. This book was originally published in German in 1980.

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Definition and Composition of the Nomenklatura

The nomenklatura is defined as a list of key personnel positions, appointment to which is made by higher authorities in the party. Every nomenklaturist belongs to the nomenklatura of a definite leading party agency. It is this agency that appointed him, and it alone can dismiss him. (In practice, however, once on the nomenklatura list, one can expect never to be removed.) Thus, ministers and ambassadors belong to the nomenklatura of the Politburo; deputy ministers and directors of institutes belong to that of the Secretariat of the Central Committee.

This book, therefore, is a study of the ruling class in the USSR. Voslensky has divided the nomenklatura into three categories: (1) leaders of the party, komsomol, trade unions and other social organizations and their subdivisions (numbering altogether about 100,000 by Voslensky's estimate); (2) heads of state administration and their deputies, belonging to the state apparatus, not the party apparatus (150,000); (3) key positions in economy, scientific and learned institutions and education (400-500,000). Together with their family members they number about three million or 1 1/2 percent of the population of the Soviet Union.

The most important selection criteria for the nomenklatura is political, not professional. To illustrate this point, Voslensky creates a hypothetical situation where an "Albert Einstein", who is not a party member, and an "Ivan Stupidov", who is a member of the CPSU, are competing for the same scientific nomenklatura position. It is awarded to Stupidov because his political qualifications are superior to Einstein's.

Privileges that come with belonging to the nomenklatura greatly increase the total value of the position's salary, which is considerably above non-nomenklatura salaries to begin with. Vacations for nomenklaturists are twice as long as those for the ordinary Soviet worker, they are cost free, and special, better class accommodations are provided. There are special food stores for nomenklaturists who receive coupons allowing them to get their food there. The selection is better and one does not have to battle the crowds. And when the nomenklaturist is ill, better health care is available for him. In short, life is easier and more luxurious for the nomenklaturist.

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Voslensky tells us that it was from Lenin's corps of professional revolutionaries that Stalin created the nomenklatura. The country was so large that the organization of professional revolutionaries alone was not large enough to govern it, to fill all the responsible positions. Applicants rushed to fill the positions and all that was required was that the applicant not be of noble or bourgeois origin and that he must be a member of the party or komsomol. The key to Stalin's historic ascent was that he succeeded in concentrating all appointments to key positions in the country in his own hands and those of his apparatus.

The apparatus of the KGB belongs completely to the nomenklatura, as does that of the diplomatic services. In the Interior Ministry (MVD) and other ministries, there are nomenklatura posts side by side with others. Khrushchev is reported to have stated that Stalin and Beria had placed the state security agencies above the party and the state. After Stalin's death, the party leadership undertook a purge of the state security agencies, securing their submission and depriving them of their freedom of action against the nomenklatura. From being a mysterious monster of which everyone was terrified, the KGB turned into what it is today, a secret political police force closely linked with and subordinate to the party apparatus. The submission of the KGB to party control is best exemplified by the appointment in 1967 of Yuriy Andropov to be the head of the KGB. His reputation at that time was that of a loyal party man who would bring the KGB firmly into party control. He did that and more. Under Andropov's tenure, the power structure of the KGB was increased, responsibilities expanded, strength in numbers grew, the image of the KGB both at home and abroad was improved, methods refined, and we saw the tentacles of the KGB spreading, working their way into all areas of Soviet bureaucracy. For example, in Azerbaijan between 1969 and 1972 under the guise of an anti-corruption campaign, KGB men were appointed to 1,983 responsible nomenklatura posts.

Voslensky equates the authority of the armed forces under the Ministry of Defense with the Ministry of Internal Affairs. He contends, however, that while the power of the military could be immense, the nomenklatura takes appropriate steps to counter any potential threats to its authority from that source. These special measures include separating the internal police and border troops from the rest of the army, putting them under KGB or MVD control; indulging military nomenklaturists with special privileges so that they have no reason for envying party officials; and following an unwritten rule that military nomenklaturists must be apolitical.

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The masters of the nomemklatura are not Marxists by Voslensky's definition, in spite of the lofty touting of the principles of Marx. Soviet ideology passes over in silence a whole series of Marxist principles, and in Voslensky's view Marx would have turned away in disgust from the system the Soviets have established. Leninism, unlike Marxism, is not a theory or hypothesis, but a strategy and tactics for the seizure of power decked out in Marxist slogans. The nomenklaturists are not Leninists; the real Leninists were shot forty years ago in the cellars of the NKVD. The ideology of the nomenklaturist class is Stalinist chauvinism.

Entering the Nomenklatura

How does one become a part of the nomenklatura? Obituaries of nomenklatura officials in the Soviet press suggest that the enormous majority of first-generation nomenklaturists were of peasant origin. In the early days of the Soviet state, nomenklatura positions were handed out by Stalin and his apparatus to those with the proper political credentials. Today the trend is toward nomenklaturists obtaining nomenklatura posts for their children. An enterprising young man can still work his way into a nomenklatura position by first of all joining the party, then establishing a reputation for ambition and a willingness to do anything to obtain the desired appointment. He cultivates those who can be useful to him, showing a special doglike devotion to the man in his chain of command whose position gives him power to propose new members of the nomenklatura. Voslensky takes us on a journey with just such an aspiring young careerist, the fictional Ivan Ivanovich Ivanov, and we watch him cultivating his group chief with obsequious behavior, achieving the desired nomenklatura appointment and then always striving to rise to a yet higher position. Although the privileges that come with a nomenklatura position are considerable and make life easier and more enjoyable, what matters most to the nomenklaturist is power.

Factions

It is impossible to make one's way in the nomenklatura class without a great deal of support. It is essential to join a faction in which everyone helps everyone else while at the same time trying to undermine rival factions.

Nowhere is this factional rivalry more visible than in the struggles for power in the Kremlin. Herein lies the

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weakness of the nomenklatura, the inability to guarantee an orderly and routine succession of power. Voslensky shows us the factional struggle with its subtle intrigues that was underway even before Brezhnev's death, distinguished by Andropov's KGB disinformation network spreading the idea that Brezhnev was on the verge of dying. Further, it is incomprehensible to Voslensky that the very experienced Soviet censors somehow could no longer prevent television, film or photo shots of Brezhnev that showed him looking helpless, an impotent old man. Andropov was able to get Ustinov's support, making possible his succession to the post of general secretary. Andropov persuaded his opponents to vote for him. But he persuaded them KGB style--that it would be in their own personal best interests not to oppose him.

Voslensky tells us that corruption is rampant in the Soviet Union. Even though nomenklaturists are forbidden to accept bribes, they do so frequently, on a large scale, and punishment is rare and mild. The indulgent attitude toward corruption can be attributed to the solidarity among the nomenklaturists, all of whom are equally keen to add to their material wealth. Voslensky contends that Andropov's anti-corruption campaign was designed mainly to exert control over the nomenklaturists.

Conclusion

Voslensky makes no predictions for the future. He has given us an insider's view of the ruling class of the Soviet Union, its strengths and weaknesses, its goals and aspirations. It is his hope that this book will contribute to our understanding of the nature of the nomenklatura and enable us in the West to deal more effectively with those who constitute its ranks.

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